The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Jail Revolt Prompts Call for Punishment

By Natalya Krainova

December 03, 2012



Staff at Kopeisk's Penal Colony No. 6, where hundreds of prisoners revolted for two days last month over inhumane treatment and extortion, should be "punished" for "gross legal violations," the region's top prosecutor said Tuesday.

Vladimir Turbanov told a presidential human rights council meeting in Chelyabinsk that prosecutors had uncovered violations that warranted the firing of prison personnel, Interfax reported.

More than 350 official complaints have been filed with investigators, including over 250 claims of physical violence and torture, 161 of extortion, 28 of labor violations and 20 of substandard medical aid, said councilman Igor Kalyapin.

Specifically, inmates were subjected to loud music by heavy-metal band Rammstein and flamboyant singer Boris Moiseyev, as well as electric shocks, local rights activist Nikolai Shchur said by phone Tuesday.

President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday fired Federal Prison Service deputy head Alexei Velichko, as part of a shakeup in the agency's leadership that started with the appointment of a new chief in June.

Izvestia reported that Velichko had been responsible for educational work with prisoners and cited experts as saying his dismissal was not linked to the Kopeisk prison riot.

Regional investigators opened an abuse-of-authority case against staff at Penal Colony No. 6 on Nov. 27, a day after the revolt officially ended.

Top regional investigator Pavel Cheurin told the council meeting on Tuesday that all current and some former inmates at the prison would be questioned. He added that local investigators had opened 17 criminal cases against prison officials last year and 30 such cases in the first 10 months of this year.

Eduard Petrukhin, deputy head of the Federal Prison Service, told the council that reform of the nation's penitentiary system was "failing" because officials who drafted the measures had not consulted the public, prosecutors and investigators.

In late 2009, then-President Dmitry Medvedev ordered wide-scale reform of the prison system following the high-profile death of whistle-blowing lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in pretrial detention.

The reform has been overseen by Justice Minister Alexander Konovalov and former prison service chief Alexander Reimer. It has included abolishment of pretrial detention for economic offenders and separation of first-time convicts from repeat offenders.

Petrukhin told the meeting that the government would form a working group this year to "correct" the reform. "I feel ashamed to hear the system's problems, the prison reform turned out to be a failure. It was written without asking the opinion of the public, investigators and prosecutors," he said.

According to the Federal Prison Service, the country's prison system contains 639,600 prisoners, down 7.6 percent since last year.

Related articles:

- Prison Revolt Yields More Questions Than Answers
- Criminal Cases Opened in Connection With Prison Protest
- Hundreds of Inmates Strike at Chelyabinsk Prison

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/12/03/jail-revolt-prompts-call-for-punishment-a19906